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[Interview with] Viola Bird

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MARIAN GOULD GALLAGHER LAW LIBRARY:
AN ORAL HISTORY

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A chance meeting with Mrs. Bird in August of 1985 prompted this library history. She told me that since her retirement from the University in 1973 she had worked part-time for large law firm libraries, taking occasional breaks for traveling. I thought that anyone so in love with her field must be part of an interesting story, and I began my search.

Mrs. Bird did finally retire—for good this time, she says—in July 1986 at the age of 81, just in time to make her third trip to Nepal. (While there, incidentally, her bus encountered a rock slide and Mrs. Bird walked the final four miles from Tibet into Nepal.)

Our interview was held at my dining room table late one afternoon on a Thursday—her only day off—following her hair appointment and just before she dashed off to the ballet.

Date: March 6, 1986

Length: 1.5 hours
Today I'm talking to Viola Bird. Viola, you received your LL.B. in 1950, and then your master of law librarianship in 1953. Then you were assistant librarian at the law library for 20 years, from 1953 until your retirement in 1973. You took your law training over a period of several years, is that right?

Almost more than several. I started at USC in 1927-28, then we were married at Christmas time of '28, and came up here. I started again part time at the University of Washington five or six hours a quarter. However, we produced a child in about ten and a half months, so there was an interim period. But I did finally -- after two or three years -- complete that second year of law.

Your husband was on the faculty then?

My husband had been on the faculty for two or three years before I came. That made it very nice for me to have him teaching where there was a law school, so that I could complete that education.

He was in Speech?

He was in the speech department. Yes. We decided that when the older child was three years old that if we had any more family, we'd better have another one and raise them together. By the time the second one was born, I was interested in faculty wives' work and church work and other ladies' groups. So I stopped law school and didn't go back to it until after the war. My husband went into the service, and I maintained a home here for the girls and myself, and after the war was over, I thought, "They're in high school now, and I'll go back and finish my education. Again over a period of about three years - I'd take about six or seven hours a quarter -- I finally completed work for my LL.B. in 1950.

Were there many women doing what you were doing then?

I suppose when I was in law school, in the three class years, there were about seven or eight women in school, only about two or three
in a class. Marian Gallagher had a friend in the speech dept, whom I had known for a good many years, and she said, "I have a friend who went to law school, and when she finished, she went to library school." I thought, "Oh, my, if I finish law school, that will be it." But by the time I did, I realized there was the course in law librarianship here at the University of Washington. I thought I might as well go on and pursue that. My legal education had been extended over so many years, that I thought there was no chance of my taking the Bar. Seventeen years altogether I think it was. I thought maybe I could donate my time, give my time to a young lawyer who might need my help. When this course in law librarianship came to my attention, I thought, "I might as well go to school." I guess I was the perennial student by that time. So I took Marian's course -- we always refer to it as "Marian's course" -- over a period of two years. Just as I finished, in '53, the family took a summer trip to California. When I returned to Seattle, Marian had a note waiting for me, saying that Mary Sanders, who was the assistant law librarian at the time, was going to California to be the law librarian for the state of California at the state law library in Sacramento. Marian said that she had investigated and that if I wanted the position half time, they would ask for a special dispensation as far as the nepotism rule was concerned and asked me to please come and see her. So that's it. (L)

MAA: Well, you were recruited.

Bird: I guess so. Mary Sanders, by the way, was a University of Washington law school graduate, as well as of the course in law librarianship. One of the talking points for this special dispensation as far as the nepotism rule was concerned was there wasn't anyone else available with the double degrees. Marian said if they would let me work, she'd like to have me. I don't know why half time, but that was fine with me, as far as that was concerned. I was glad for any time. There was also a former teacher in the school of librarianship by the name of True Wulfekoetter (her name is Gertrude Wulfekoetter). Marian said, "True will take the other half." She was primarily a cataloguer
and later wrote a book on cataloguing. Anyway, the position was open to me if I was interested in this half-time position. True and I shared that position for two, two-and-a-half years, maybe longer.

MAA: In applying for the nepotism dispensation, Marian pointed out that -- I guess it was in 1957 -- of the 114 law school librarians in the U.S., only 29 had 2 degrees. And each time she had to plead for you to be able to stay, she pointed out the distinct advantage of having a librarian with the two degrees.

Bird: Marian always documented anything like that. She wouldn't just say, "She has her degrees and we're satisfied," or something like that. I'm not surprised that she documented it with the actual numbers. They were few and far between at that time. There were a number of lawyers and there were lots of librarians. I didn't know the exact figure, but I'm not surprised that there were those figures at that time.

MAA: When you started taking the library courses, did you enjoy that?

Bird: Yes. Very much. I found library school so different from law school. It bothered me a little bit when it came to examinations, for the simple reason that in law school it was all your own thoughts, your own interpretation or understanding of the question and analysis of the question and your response to it. In library school when I'd take an exam, it was simply handing back some of the factual knowledge. The two disciplines are quite different. I may have misunderstood a little bit. Maybe they wanted more creativity from me, but I had a different feeling about library school. I thoroughly enjoyed it. In the same class there was a very interesting young woman from the University of British Columbia who was also a law librarianship student by the name of Diana Priestly. She has gone on to make quite a name for herself in Canadian law libraries and I feel is one of Marian's very outstanding students. She now is at the University of Victoria Law Library, and will retire there. But the two of us were the only law librarianship students at the time in library school.
MAA: I've talked with Penny Hazelton, who described her schooling in the seventies, and there were seven students in the class. She said it was largely a seminar setting. Much of their work was done through actual practice and research work. I suppose it was somewhat similar at that time, is that right?

Bird: Yes. As far as Marian's classes were concerned, very much so. What I was talking about was a difference in the approach and examinations in the basic library classes in librarianship school. Marian's classes were very practical. She gave you projects to work on. I suppose partly because there wasn't that much written so that she could say, "Here, read these books." It was from that standpoint invaluable because when you went out to work, you had that practical experience or background. And, of course, I think the fieldwork was especially important too. As you know, currently I'm at a couple of the firm libraries down in central Seattle. When students get out of library school, they know so little about some of the library procedures. Marian helped with those a lot. I did my fieldwork at Los Angeles County Law Library, which is maybe not the largest (Cook County in Chicago is very large), but anyway a very large outstanding county law library. There they gave me an opportunity to work in the different departments. I remember working at preparing things for binding and circulation and cataloguing, and so I feel that fieldwork experience is especially important.

MAA: Did you have any work at all in administration, running a library, since many of the people who come out of the training do go fairly directly into administrative work.

Bird: I don't believe so. You know, that was a long time ago, 30 years ago (L) or more, but as I think back to the courses, there really wasn't that much in administration. I suppose, we saw Marian's administration and it rubbed off. We saw how she administered things although, now that I think about it, did we have a course in law library administration? Marian would have to tell you about that because having worked now for 30 years, I guess I can't divide the
law school classes from the practical experience
or remember accurately that far back.

MAA: When you mention people who came to the law
library for their internship, were those people
who were coming out of standard librarianship
programs?

Bird: Yes.

MAA: They would spend a short period of time at the
law school, is that right?

Bird: Yes. Field work is, I think, still a month of
the spring quarter, and these would be students
that didn't have a law degree. They weren't in
her program, but they were interested in a law
library. Maybe for some family reason, they
didn't have an opportunity to go away for a
month because it is rather an expensive propo-
sition. Some of them, however, did find a
place where they would be paid a little bit to
cover their expenses.

MAA: You must have observed many interns over the
years? Did you feel that those who had a law
degree had a distinct advantage over those who
did not?

Bird: As far as those field work students were
concerned at U.W., we never had law librarians-
ship students. Marian always placed her law
librarianship students in other law libraries
throughout the country. The general library
students who did their field work at the Law
Library would work maybe three days in one
department, maybe a week somewhere else.
Marian assigned them work within the various
departments, and the staff supervised them
while they were there. That way they received
more or less a look at the total operation of
the Law Library.

MAA: As a student, it didn't make much difference?

Bird: I don't think so.

MAA: The difference would be when they would be
employed? And then it would be an advantage,
they would know the research material better if
they had a law degree.
Bird: Supposedly. (L) Maybe you knew that they interviewed me for the ABA Journal. In that, it quoted me as saying, "I think I know better what I'm researching for the attorneys now. I don't know if my law degree has helped me that much, nor other people, but at least I know what I'm researching better than the person who doesn't have a law degree. The final research may not be any better.

MAA: Well, that's interesting that the person with two degrees does not necessarily make a better law librarian.

Bird: I don't know that it does. It broadens your whole background and your fund of knowledge, your interest. But there are a good many of these present, practicing law librarians who have double degrees, who didn't want to practice. Or maybe they practiced for a few years and didn't like it, and then went on to library school, or maybe already had library degrees. Now, I'm working with a young woman down at one of the firms in Seattle who was a librarian. She came to the University of Washington for her J.D. and practiced in Spokane for two years but found out she didn't enjoy practice as much as she thought she was going to. She had her library life, her education and her experience, she is now a confirmed law librarian. She thoroughly enjoys what she's doing now, with the two disciplines.

I think that some people through the years have thought that all law librarians with double degrees were people who were unsuccessful lawyers. I don't think that was true at all. Because there have been some outstanding -- and they're still practicing -- people who like the profession of librarianship. It's a very rewarding profession, I feel. I think about the best. (L) Regardless of whether it's law or general librarianship or school libraries, I just feel as though it's about tops.

Look at Penny Hazelton now and some of these who are tops. They're young. And they're really at the top. I don't know Penny's background well enough to know whether she was ever interested in practice, but she wanted that education, that discipline, and I have a
feeling she went right on into library school knowing that she wanted to be a law librarian. If that isn't the situation with Penny, there are others that I know who have done that. They had no intention of practicing.

MAA: You taught in the program often, didn't you?

Bird: No. I really didn't teach in the law librarianship program, except one summer, and that was really after I retired. That was a course for non-lawyers, and mainly the students were some of the firm librarians from downtown or some of the general students whom even now are permitted to take some of Penny or Marian's courses. They were not candidates for a master of law librarianship, but they selected some of those courses and were permitted to take them. And those courses were geared differently for those students than they were for Marian's or Penny's students who are lawyers. You'll hear people saying, "I had some of Marian's classes." They may have been in some of the same classes -- you'd have to ask her about that -- with some of her master of law librarianship students. But I believe they were courses that were set up for the general library school student with some specialization in legal materials, so they would know something about handling them. So many public and school libraries, for instance, have some legal material, it is good for the librarian to have some background in how to handle such material. I think sometimes that the world is practicing law! Everybody wants to be a lawyer and do it themselves. There are legal materials in many other libraries, not just straight law school or law firm libraries.

MAA: I understand that growing phenomenon has had quite an impact on the Gallagher Library. Was that happening before you retired even ... the growing interest by the general public in law reference work?

Bird: Our patronage increased a lot while I was there. So we got lots of people from the outside just thrashing around doing their own research and so forth. But this tremendous growth in everyone wanting to be a lawyer, and especially the young women, has come since the
sixties and particularly the seventies. As I said, while I was there, there were about seven or eight women in law school. That was in the fifties. And now, my goodness, I think the girls almost outnumber the young men.

MAA: So that's a big shift.

Bird: It is a big shift. I notice it especially when I'm there at the school and see how many women there are.

MAA: When you first went on the staff half time, what did you do?

Bird: As I remember it, there again, I'm reaching way back. I was particularly assigned to circulation and reference, because we didn't have a reference librarian at the time. I did some work in acquisitions by handling the financial part of acquisitions. Marian selected the books and checked them in, but I saw that the bills were paid. But my work was mainly in circulation and supervising the circulation staff or desk. The hours were not as extended as they are now. And we had quite a bit of student help, as well as one full time circulation librarian. We also had a catalogue librarian, but we didn't have any reference librarian at the time. People would come in and say to Marian, "What about this?" So she did reference from her desk, as I did also.

Cecil Smith received his masters of law librarianship in 1960. I'm not sure, Marian could confirm this, whether he was the first reference librarian or not. I have the feeling he was. He was a practicing attorney. I think he's still practicing in Bellevue. And I think he did not want to give up his practice entirely, so he said he would take the position half-time. And at that time I offered, "If they'll let me work full time, I'll take the other half," because up to the time he came I was only working half time. So for two or three years Cec held the morning reference position and I was there in the afternoon. I don't know how Marian got around the nepotism rule, but I think by that time, it probably was no problem. Although you did say that she still requested it in 1965. Actually, Cec was also involved in the nepotism rule for his
wife, Bea Smith, was the librarian at the U.W. Forestry Library.

MAA: Yes. I do see a memo here dated 11/16/65 from Solomon Katz, who was provost then, asking that Marian resubmit a request for the employment of Mrs. Bird on the form "Request for Approval to Employ under the Nepotism Rule" and forward it to appropriate channels for review by the president. As set forth in University memorandum #41, all appointments under the nepotism rule would be reviewed periodically by the president. I don't know when that ended.

Bird: Eventually, I can remember its ending and then their saying that it was no longer in effect, that two in the same family could work. The nepotism rule came into being because of the depression. Job positions were so scarce and they had to spread them around, rather than having two in the family working for the University. They finally relaxed it to the extent that two in the family could work for the University, provided they were not in the same department with one supervising the other. I believe that is the premise of the nepotism rule now, if there is such a thing.

MAA: So, you did do some reference work?

Bird: Yes.

MAA: Did you enjoy that?

Bird: Oh, yes. Very much. I'm sure it was very basic and primitive. But anyway, it's very rewarding. You help someone find something they had no idea they were looking for or where it is. I'm too old to be a computer person. And yet I wish I knew more about the current methods of LEXIS and WESTLAW legal research. But I guess I'm too old to learn. It is extremely rewarding to know or think there's some information there, and then help someone find it.

END OF SIDE A
Viola Bird  Tape 1 of 2. Side B

MAA: I would think that reference work must be one of the most rewarding parts of library work.

Bird: It is.

MAA: Well, let's talk about computers for just a minute. You, I assume, must work with LEXIS and WESTLAW now.

Bird: I do not, I'm sorry to say, and in this one firm where I'm helping out now while the young woman is on maternity leave, I keep saying, "I don't do LEXIS. I do windows, but I don't do LEXIS," partly because LEXIS is too new. I've been trained on LEXIS and on WESTLAW, although I have never used WESTLAW. In getting my training for the major firm downtown, the attorneys who were trained on it did most of their own research. The few times that I was asked to do it, I didn't think I was very successful at it, and the cost of it made me a little nervous, thinking how much each minute is costing while I'm flubbing around. So, that part of legal research has passed me by and I guess that's why I say I'm too old to learn. However, the two librarians who are in that firm use it a great deal and they help the attorneys that are there. But there again, they are not afraid of it as I am. Also part of it is, they don't know how to research manually as I do. I notice that often I can go and find it in the books and they'll say, "We'll try LEXIS." I can probably find it almost as fast as they can, and it hasn't cost the client -- because the client always pays that money. But there again, I may be rationalizing because I'm the age I am.

MAA: But the very use of these research methods -- LEXIS and WESTLAW -- probably does mean that people are just not developing the former research skills.

Bird: It worries me. Are your law professors concerned at all?

MAA: I don't know.
Bird: I've wondered about that.

MAA: I've not heard it discussed. Now, I will say that Penny mentioned yesterday that the professors who have arrived at the law school within the last ten years do not make the same requests of the library staff that the older professors do, the ones who are accustomed to working with the staff all the time, making requests. Whether the reason for that is that they are using ...

Bird: Push a button.

MAA: Yes. I don't know.

Bird: I'd be interested in talking to Marjorie Rombauer about that some time. She has, through the years, developed this wonderful course in research and writing, and how she feels about all of this. It's here to stay. I can't hold it back, but also I feel that maybe they never will develop a manual approach to research; I can see that in the young associates who come to the firm. Their first thought is, "Can we get it on LEXIS?" I feel quite sure that it's partly that they have no idea how to research manually. When you have a whole library of material there, it just seems to me as though one should be using that. But now, you're getting some of my philosophy, which is outside the realm of this interview. Anyway, someday maybe I'll have an opportunity to talk to Marjorie.

MAA: Marjorie Rombauer. Did you work with her at all in her class?

Bird: No. Not really. Marian, had two former students on her staff Jacqueline Bartells, the cataloguer before she went to the University of California at Berkeley, and Mary Sanders. I know Mary Sanders and, I think, Jackie and Marian and I all used to teach classes in legal research. Those classes, however had no legal writing or anything like that. It was to acquaint the students with the different types of materials. In other words, the digests and the reports. Of course, many students came and they didn't know the
difference between a report and a statute, and so forth. So it was to acquaint them with the materials that they would be working with the rest of their legal life.

MAA: This would be for first year students?

Bird: For first year students. Yes. I think at first (Marian could confirm this) it came at the end of their first year, the third quarter. The administration finally realized, and I saw it too, that those students were very eager when they would go to law school. The books were here, they could read them, but how did they get into all this extra material that text books are based on? They were very eager to know how to do that research. Then they started it in, I believe, the first quarter. I can remember taking them individually over to the digests and other research tools and explaining if you want to get into it, this is the way. Teaching little classes on the side.

MAA: Was that informal?

Bird: Yes, it was very informal. They'd ask a question and you couldn't say, "You'll get to that in spring quarter." You tried to help them on the spot. But it seemed to me that each year their interest and their desire for it came earlier. I can remember as a law student, I had my textbooks and read the cases and briefed them and that was enough for me. I didn't have sense enough to realize that I should be knowing how to research other cases or points of law. So we did teach a basic course in Legal Bib, I think it was called, as compared with the course that Marjorie Rombauer developed in research and writing.

MAA: So that was a forerunner.

Bird: It really was; I think that most of the law schools did the same thing. I believe that the course that Marjorie developed was one of the early ones in that kind of writing and research.

MAA: The work that you did in acquisitions ...
Bird: I did no book selection. Excuse me for interrupting. Maybe that wasn't what you were going to ask. But I did no book selection. Marian did book selection. I usually just took care of the bills, supervised some of the mending. Books do fall apart. And then the cataloguer catalogued the books. When they were unpacked upon receipt, they would be wheeled into Marian's office. She would go over them to see that they were what she had ordered. I'd get the bills. And then the cataloguer would catalogue them. Also the cataloguer had the responsibility of supervising the processing of them. In other words, stamping and pocket cards and that sort of thing.

MAA: I'm assuming that the major role that you played in personnel where you supervised the staff for many, many years, must have evolved gradually.

Bird: Yes. Very. At first, Marian did all of the hiring of people for the staff, and I usually supervised getting them started in the particular type of work they were going to do.

And something interesting -- excuse me for going on because this may not be exactly where you were leading -- but it's become very difficult to hire because of the procedures that are required now. At that time, Marian could always justify someone to come for maybe a short period of time. I don't think this is telling any secrets, but a woman friend of Marian's wanted to buy a piano for her young son. Times were hard, and the family just didn't have money for a piano. Marian said, "Well, you can come and mend books for us."

Things were that casual really at that time. Books falling apart and someone needed to do it; it was before she had the "book conservator," which it was called at first. Now it's the book mender, I don't know. You needed to do a lot of work on books that were so heavily used, and so this friend came and worked for us, I don't know how long. This lady has fond memories of the old glue pot.
The glue was made out of animal something, because when it got heated up in an old copper kettle that they heated on an electric plate -- with the glue soft enough to use with a big brush -- it was rather pungent. But anyway, she has fond memories of helping mend books. Things, as I said, were that casual. I'm sure she was worth every penny that Marian paid her for her work, but you didn't have to go through channels to hire someone back then.

So I did a lot of supervising, as I started to say. Marian hired most of the people in my first years, interviewed them, and then as she got busier and the staff was larger, I did lots of the interviewing and hiring, especially of the student help or some of the undergraduate students that we employed. Many of them worked just part time.

MAA: Marian mentioned to me that you always tried to have everybody work on the circulation desk. Was that a philosophy that just evolved or was it something that you consciously made a decision about?

Bird: It evolved. It was a way of spreading out the staff. If you were out there with the students and with the books, it would have been a rather dull, uninteresting life. I suppose that is why I hung onto that. I supervised circulation from the very beginning, as I remember. But everyone took their turn working at the circulation desk, partly to know what the collection was and what the students' needs were, how to wait on them, where to direct them. Over in the old building, in old Condon, we had five floors in the library with the main library and the reading room on the third, or top, floor. This was the only floor open to the public. There were intermediate floors in other words, there were 1, 1M, 2, 2M, and 3. So there were 5 floors of books. Eventually, when a reference department was established, it was located on 2M, resulting then in two floors being open to the public. Otherwise, people from the circulation desk had to service materials in the closed stacks that were on 1, 1M, 2 and 2M until the reference department was started.
MAA: You did succeed in opening those stacks even before you moved?

Bird: Just that one floor. Now in new Condon all floors of the library are open to the public -- they can go up and down the six or seven floors there -- with the exception of the Faculty Library on the third floor.

MAA: What's your personal feeling about open or closed stacks?

Bird: It was awfully hard when it was necessary to go two or three floors and use the elevator -- if the elevator wasn't operating, you used the stairway -- to service every book in that place. We even had what were called West Stacks, that were in a locked area over beyond the entrance to the library, so it was as far as could be, but still be in the same building. You had to make a number of trips down there in a day. We didn't wait for requests to pile up and say, "We'll go down to floor 1 or make a run every hour on the hour." Every book that was asked for was serviced at the time. There were always two people assigned at the circulation desk. They had hand work to be done, so if they weren't busy they could make good use of the time. But one person was left alone at the circulation desk while the other one went down to get whatever book was needed.

It meant a tremendous amount of running. And it wouldn't work at all with the volume, the size of the law school class, plus all of the other people, the clientele, with the general students, lawyers, and everyone that are coming into the law school nowadays. No way could they service that whole group of patrons now.

MAA: Have you always had as many attorneys using the library?

Bird: Proportionately, I suppose. Yes. We've always had, I felt, a very heavy use by attorneys. In the first place, they didn't have the large firm libraries that they have now. Some of the law firm libraries are very large and adequate. However, all of them, even the largest, use the King County Law Library a great deal. And daily. Not just occasionally, once a week or
something. But there are messengers, or in my major firm, we always say, "We'll go over at noon." I sort of established that. We were farther removed from the King County Law Library when we were in the IBM Building and so I'd say, "O.K., I'll go at noon." While I was out of the building, I might just as well take a little more time and go down to King County. And then living out in this part of town I could get anything from the University that they needed. Now their libraries are much larger and more adequate, but as far as the University is concerned, the attorneys have always used it a great deal.

Marian was always very service-oriented and had a very open policy about using that material. It is state material, and there is no reason why the attorneys, particularly the judges and the attorneys who were helping pay for the material, why they shouldn't have use of it.

Marian and I -- I don't know whether we ever argued about this -- but I always had a strong feeling about what she said the priorities were. Marian's first priority for use of materials was the students; then the faculty, and then the bench and bar. I don't know that I ever said to her, but I thought many times: "No way, Marian. No way. You give to the faculty first priority, the students next, and then the bench and bar."

But everyone has had the use of the material. And then the general public, of course, too. I don't think that's true of law schools throughout the country, at all. I don't think they have nearly the open door policy that Marian has had.

MAA: How would they differ?

Bird: In most - or many - I think you had to be a student or a graduate of the law school to be able to use it. But Marian is a very open person. She attracts people, and she wants to serve people. And so I think she realized that they should have the advantage. A sole practitioner in a small office needed to have whatever material the state had paid for and should have the use of it without restrictions. And there
were very few restrictions as far as her circulation policy was concerned.

She and one of her students, who is the librarian at King County, Jim McCardle, and Connie Bolden at the state law library in Olympia got together -- but particularly Marian and Jim -- and sort of divided up the collection. In other words, one set of reports from other countries was adequate. There was no reason why they should put their money into two or three sets of certain material when one set in the state was adequate and could be loaned throughout the state to the attorneys needing it. The U.W. and the State Law Library have always had a very active lending policy as far as sending materials out to other attorneys throughout the state.

MAA: So there was regional planning?

Bird: There really was. Within the city they planned quite well. So they'd think, "What's the use of having two sets of those when one set is adequate." They've had a very good, cooperative arrangement, I think.

MAA: That would be specifically on material that would not be used very often?

Bird: But someone in the state needed to have it. Legal collections are extremely expensive, and there's no need of pouring money down the drain that way when they may need the money for other things. I'm thinking particularly about some of the Pennsylvania reports that Jim McCardle has down at King County. He had me go through them and then let Reba know recently what was there. Reba at University of Washington had everything, so he said there's no reason for my holding on to those. He will give them space for the time being because at this time, there is no sale for them. Some of those have been redone in reprints. But it's been a cooperative thing here. I think Marian would have had the same relationship with the man who preceded Jim, Mr. Jarvis. There may have been an interim person there. I think for a county law librarian, he was outstanding. He developed a very good collection and Jim, I feel, has carried on very well.
Of course, Marian inherited an excellent collection. Dr. Beardsley had foresight about it as far as a research collection was concerned, and I think Marian appreciated it. And she didn't let it go. She continued it. If there were periods when she had to cut down financially, she knew how to cut. And I remember her saying, "I must preserve this collection. I can't let that area go. Because we could never get it back. We'll cut some other way."

So, she's put her life into it. I'm so glad; I was happy when they finally named the library for her. Honored her. Oh, yes. Because no one and no one ever will, contribute as much as Marian Gallagher has. Penny will make a name for herself here. But no one will ever give to that library what Marian Gallagher has given to it. And while she inherited a good library from Dr. Beardsley, it should have been named the Marian Gould Gallagher, as it was.

MAA: I'm astounded at the relationships that existed within the staff. There must have been problems along the way, but the overall tone was one of family.

Bird: In capital letters, yes. It has been a family. Really a family. Yes, there were conflicts. Little personality quirks. You couldn't stand this one, or you fought a little with that one, or you criticized, and so on and so forth. But basically, it was a very loyal family, a very strong family relationship. And I think Marian fostered it. I don't know how. I can't tell you the secret of it. No. Except she had a faculty for getting people to work together.

MAA: Well, you mentioned to me one time, Vi, when I asked you about publications or about undertaking certain projects, that Marian always put a great deal of faith in her employees and was able to bring out from them the very best. Can you elaborate on that a bit?

Bird: Well, I learned a great deal about writing from Marian. My goodness, I think having an A.B., J.D. and even a library degree, and I'm not a good writer now, but I learned so much from
Marian about writing. And you mentioned that we'd talk about publications -- mine aren't that outstanding -- but there is one that you mentioned, which is the procedure manual. That was done for an institute. I don't remember whether we have talked on the tape about the fact that they had institutes and still do, preceding the national convention, the annual meeting.

MAA: This is the national meeting of the AALL.

Bird: That manual was written when I was fairly new in the association. The institute would have certain subjects discussed for five years and then they'd repeat them, so if you'd had the cycle, you could go on and have an advanced seminar in it. But new people were coming in all the time, so by the end of the five years, you'd had a pretty good coverage of the different areas. So they had this one institute, which was up at Grosinger's in New York, and we had to go during the week because on the weekend Grosinger's is jumping. The people from New York just flock in on Friday night, Saturday morning. Just busloads of them. It seems to me that we went up Sunday night and stayed through Friday, and then went down to New York for our convention. The subject was to be on, among other things, order procedures. This was in the late fifties. Anyway, I guess whoever set this institute up thought they would need some kind of a manual, and there again, Marian was very creative and volunteered her staff and said, "We'll do a manual.....
So Marian suggested that...

Yes, that they needed a manual, and she thought her procedures for ordering and processing were basic ones. Ruth Ault -- her name used to be Ruth Ault, then she changed her name to Genevieve -- and later married a man by the name of Grove -- so Genevieve Grove, another one of Marian's former students, Stan Pierce. and I did this manual. It was done for the A.A.L.L. Institute, which was held at Grosingers in early June of 1959. Basically, the manual contained the order procedures that we used at the University of Washington, with forms and that sort of thing for librarians who were just setting up a small library or a small law firm. It made it so practical.

It was quite a hit and it was used extensively.

Then Fred Rothman decided that some of those materials that were produced, created by the Association should be published as a series--the AALL Series of Publications. There is quite a list of them now. But that was one of the early ones. But it was because Marian said, "Viola will do it." I think I was working half time. It was before Cec Smith and I divided the reference position. So I had time for something of that nature, but there again she always said, "I'll help." So I rather think it is Marion's manual more than it is mine. (L) But that is the background of it. I hope that the manual helped people.

So those were qualities of Marian's: both wanting to make the information available to other people and having the confidence in her own people that they could do a good job of it.

Very definitely.

That was not the only publication that you were involved in. You edited the Current Index of Periodicals.

Marian had lot's of creativity and foresight. She started that for the professors, thinking they needed to know what new materials are
coming into the library each week. Some places xerox the title page and distribute it, but rather than do that, she indexed everything that came in in a given week and sent copies to the professors to keep them advised as to what had been published. It was a subject approach, so that if they were interested in antitrust, they probably didn't need to look at taxation to see what had been written about it. It kept them advised of what was new in the library for that week. I guess before I started she must have done it herself. I don't know that anyone else did had done the indexing. But, there again, as she became busier, she turned it over to me. And so for a good many years I did the indexing of all the periodicals -- the law reviews, and the law journals from the law schools. Those were the items included in the Current Index.

MAA: That was weekly?

Bird: That was weekly. As the news got around, she built up quite a circulation. Many of the law schools subscribed to that Current Index. It seems to me as though twelve or fifteen years ago, we mailed out as many as 50 copies to the University of Michigan, so that each one of their law professors received one.

We usually got it indexed and in the mail by Friday, sometimes on Thursday. By the next Monday or Tuesday, they would have it in their offices, you see. It was well named Current Index. It filled in the new material that had been received before Index to Legal Periodicals came. And that often was two and three months behind. By the time that W.H. Wilson received the periodicals and indexed them and then printed them -- theirs was printed, ours was typed and mimeographed -- we could get our Current Index so much faster. When Index to Legal Periodicals came out, ours was obsolete really. So that ours were of no value as soon as the next issue of Index to Legal Periodicals came out. Then it got to the place where we would note on them what had been included in the Index to Legal Periodicals. They still do that, so that then you can toss the ones that are included. That still is going on of course, and they have a tremendous circulation.
MAA: Does 2,000 seem unreasonable? It seems that I saw that.

Bird: I wouldn't be surprised if it now is 2,000.

MAA: Give me an idea of the size of the project. Would it be four or five pages, two or three pages?

Bird: After the war, there were more and more law schools, and most of them eventually began some kind of a publication edited by their top students. Almost all of them published law reviews or law journals. So as that number increased, there might be 12, 14, 15 issues received in a given week. It depended on how many had been received that week, as to how large the index was. I think, often, it would run 10 to 12 pages.

MAA: So you were meeting a deadline every week?

Bird: Every week, yes. In fact they had a surprise retirement party for me, one of the times I retired, I really was leaving. They said "We want you to go down to the faculty library." That's where they were having it. I said "I can't. I have to take this index over to the mailroom." (L). I had to get the show on the road. (L) Anyway, those went out every week. And they still do.

MAA: They serve a real need?

Bird: Yes. And I see it used downtown quite a bit, too, you know. It is interesting to know that it is carried on. It was started mainly for the U. of Washington law professors so that they could know what was new in their particular field.

MAA: One of the other things that you did regularly was to write a column for the Law Library Journal.

Bird: Yes. "Current Comments." I did that quite a long time. Marian was editor of the Law Library Journal. I'm not sure whether she was editor at the time. I have a feeling she was. She said, "Viola can do that." And Viola couldn't
write very well, but there again I learned alot about writing. I would write these little short notices about things that were happening in the law library field. Sometimes I use to think it was her writing, because she would edit so carefully. But she was very, very careful about her editing. She wouldn't take my manuscript and mark it up. She would take a sheet of paper and number the corrections. She didn't want mine to look messy by the time it was edited. She would say -- very nicely -- "Wouldn't it be better to say this." Sometimes I thought that work was Marian Gallagher's. But, anyway, once again she said, "But I'll help you." And so she did. Anyway I edited that for a good many years.

MAA: Would people send you information to be included in the column?

Bird: Not usually. The reason that she said that she or her staff would take care of it, was that she was getting so much material through her office -- and she looked at everything that came into that library -- material she thought would be of interest to other law librarians. "Current Comments" was in the Law Library Journal. Now it is in our newsletter, the AALL Newsletter, which comes out monthly. But the Law Library Journal came out only four times a year, and the column contained items that she thought other law librarians should know about. She passed material on to me and said, "This probably would make a good comment." I don't think I had to use it. She thought many of the law librarians in the country might not have happened to subscribe to that little pamphlet or get that notice or look over the myriad of materials that she received.

MAA: Was the journal primarily an academic journal?

Bird: Yes, it has always been a professional journal like your law reviews. It has maintained a very high, professional quality.

MAA: Viola, for most of your career you were highly involved with the American Association of Law Libraries. You were on the executive board from 1968-1972 and you were president in 1971-1972. And you were the only person to assume
Viola Bird: I think so. It was probably because of my long years of activity in the association. I had served on a number of committees. I think one of the main reasons that I became as active in the association as I did was that I followed another student of Marian's by the name of Betty Le Bus who had been chairman of the scholarship committee for the American Association of Law Libraries. I served with her on that committee a year or two, and then I was asked to be chairman of it. And I've always felt that that had a lot to do with my coming to the attention of the people in the association. They have a very active scholarship program with thousands of dollars for distribution. Now they have what they call grants to encourage people to come to conventions and help them out with their expenses. I did meet a lot of people through that committee and became well known because of it. I suppose then when I was asked to be nominated for the board, members thought, "Well, I know Viola Bird, and I don't know so and so, and so I will vote for Viola Bird." Anyway, I did serve two years on the board and then I was asked to accept the nomination for the presidency. So I served as president for one year. Then, of course, there was one year after that that I was on the board as the past president.

MAA: What were the issues involved? Can you remember the major issues you were dealing with while you were president?

Bird: Oh, my. That was a long time ago, wasn't it? Just off hand, I can't think of anything in particular. The president was responsible for the convention, appointing the program chairman and working on the program for the following year. Now they have an executive director who handles that because it has become such a big, big program. But that was just at the beginning of the development of the firm libraries. That whole private sector was developing. It wasn't a particularly hot issue, but they were becoming active in the association. And then also, what they call their special interest...
groups. The program for convention is very detailed and highly developed along specialized lines now. So it was a growing period, and almost a launching period for the present AALL.

About that time -- not while I was president -- it was established before that -- they opened their headquarters in Chicago, and they have maintained an office there. Before that, when Marian was president, all of the records were kept by the president and were then shipped on to the next president. So they really needed the help of a headquarters organization. She helped launch that. But it was very definitely a growth period.

MAA: Why did you want to be involved in a national organization?

Bird: I guess it was because Marian was so active in it. I wasn't trying to follow in her footsteps, because I didn't expect ever to be on the board or be the president. There never was any feeling of "You should be going to conventions." It was just part of my life at that time. And I went to many of the institutes that they had preceding the annual meeting. I think in all these years I have missed about three, which would be about thirty years or so. It was just part of my professional life.

MAA: You were involved in scholarship work and fund raising at the University also, weren't you?

Bird: Yes. That goes back to that first publication, the procedure manual. I thought if we get any money, it might go into a scholarship program for students coming to Marian's program. I really don't know how much it started out with, we'll say $1,000. I did think also that her students who had gone on to some of the outstanding positions in the country would be glad to honor her by contributing to a scholarship here at the University of Washington. I wrote to them about that, and some of them contributed and some of them didn't. Then Marian began making so many speeches, and she finally, rather than take an honorarium for herself, would say, "Make the check out to this scholarship program." So Marian herself put
hundreds and hundreds of dollars into the scholarship fund that is still active at the University.

MAA: Speaking of honors -- you've received many over the years -- but you must have been very proud of being named the Distinguished Alumnus of the School of Librarianship Alumni Association at the University of Washington. Was that a surprise to you?

Bird: Honored and shocked. I wasn't surprised, I was shocked. (L) Marian had received it quite a few years before. When they call you and say you have been selected, why you can't say I'm not going to accept, but it was quite a surprise to me.

MAA: That was 1981. A deserving award ...

Bird: Oh, I don't know. I didn't feel that it was because I didn't think I was outstanding when I think of the long list of those who have received the award, and their contribution to the whole world of librarianship, not just law librarianship.

MAA: Obviously people felt very strongly about giving it to you. We can't end this conversation without talking about the move you supervised from old Condon to new Condon, which was a logistical accomplishment that people still talk about. I think that it left you with a certain feeling of proprietorship of the new building. Is that right?

Bird: Very definitely. They were in the process of building new Condon the last year and a half or so that I was on the staff. I think they should have moved in in August. I retired in October. Building is always delayed, and they didn't get around to it until the next spring -- eight or nine months later -- quite a piece of my life intervenes in there. Since I had retired and was completely free, Marian asked if I would be interested in helping them out, because they were going to have to move in the midst of the school year. Her staff was busy, obviously. So I went back. She had a definite system of planning because, of course, with a
different building everything was arranged so
differently. We had to open up the stacks.
There was none of this servicing, 1, 1M, 2, on
the different floors. Everything was open
stacks. And so we did all the planning and
moved.

I think we must have started in February. We
started in the basement with the least used
books and moved them over first. Law school
classes were going on and they needed every-
thing. Marian had a staff over at the old
building that would load books onto book trucks
and then they would wheel those onto campus
trucks, then take them over to the new building.
They'd pull them off and line them up in the
hallway and we'd get them to the right floor
and shelf. Everything was color coded so we
knew exactly what floor, and they were numbered
so you knew exactly what shelf they would go on.

So it went very, very smoothly. However, shelf
installers are notoriously behind. They had to
airlift some of the shelving for the library
out from the East, and you can imagine what air
lifting steel shelving must have cost them.
Eventually, spring vacation came, which I
suppose was in March. We worked hard and all
the time the new Condon was looking better and
better. It was clean, it was new, the shelves
were being filled with these colorful books,
and poor old Condon was getting grubbier and
grubbier. So I always felt I had the best part
of that move, because it was just deteriorating
over there, and we were building up this palace
of books over in new Condon. Anyway, finally,
in the reading room the shelf installers came
-- I think on Friday morning and started
installing the last shelves there. As they
went down through the reading room, we were
putting books on those shelves almost -- you
can't say before the paint was dry -- but
before they moved very far down the reading
room.

Finally by Friday afternoon we had every book
over there. It had taken us six or eight
weeks, I guess, to do it. We were held up
because of the installing of the bookshelves.
But, anyway, we were through on Friday after-
noon. I went over with my vacuum on Sunday and
vacuumed so that the students could come in on Monday morning and start in their spring quarter classes in new Condon.

So you can see why I feel that that library is mine. They have changed lots of things since then, rearranged the books and so forth. At one stage, I knew where every book was in that library. It was mine, and I felt that was sort of the frosting on the cake. I had been with the old library so long and if I hadn't had that experience, it would have been a new world to me. It wouldn't have been mine, but I've felt rather possessive about it ever since. It was a privilege to do it.

MAA: It shows that it is important to be part of the transition, doesn't it?

Bird: Yes.

MAA: Did you like the new library?

Bird: Yes, very much. I think there are some horrible weaknesses in that there is no security. Absolutely no security. But it is a beautiful library. And it is a very fine, wonderful collection. It really is. And it is so reassuring when you're working downtown to be able to say, "We don't have it, and King County doesn't have that, but we can get it at the University."

End of Tape A
MAA: Vi, is there anything that we have not touched on that we should add to our conversation?

Bird: I don't know that I can think of anything specifically, except maybe about the development of the staff. As I said earlier, when I went there, there were three librarians, the assistant librarian, the cataloger and a circulation librarian. And then we used lots of student help. But through those twenty years I was there, the staff grew tremendously with the different areas that needed development and the volume of work that was required.

Individuals came, like Reba and a young man by the name of Art Ruffier, who is now the assistant librarian at the State Law Library in Olympia. Some people came as library technicians and then decided to go to library school to earn a library degree. It was a developmental period in their lives, that was rewarding to see. Marian always encouraged or permitted people to take classes anytime that they wanted. They would make up the time if they were taking classes not related to librarianship. Art and Reba Turnquist were the two I think of who became librarians and have been so faithful to the profession for so many, many years.

As I was thinking about what in the world would this interview be like and what can I contribute to it, I thought about the staff lounge. Every staff needs a place to relax, and there was a room at the back of our quarters there in old Condon. Really, it was a hallway between Condon Hall and Smith Hall, and so there was some traffic through there, especially by the Poli Sci professors who had keys. Well, anyway, we decided that we needed a staff room, where people could go and have lunch. We always had the coffee pot and some facilities in a small kitchen. A doctor, who was not particularly well and had to stop practicing for a while, came and worked on our staff for a few weeks. He decided that we should have some funds to help develop this staff room. We got some old benches which were down at Surplus Property, I think -- hard, old benches -- and a few chairs. Art helped build a big circular table, a coffee table sort of thing. All this furniture was
The staff members spent a little time now and then painting the furniture. Art went out and bought some red and white material for cushions for the staff room, and I said "I'll make the cushions." So I took the material home and boxed them, my first and only experience with boxing upholstery. Anyway, it looked quite nice, it really did, with this white furniture and these red and white cushions on the seats. And we had a party to celebrate. When the phone rang, Marian answered by saying "Dr. So and So's room." It was someone from the University President's office on the phone who said, "Oh, my, no room at the University is named without official approval by the Board of Regents." It was just a joke by the staff, it was not an official name, but we quickly stopped calling it Dr. So and So's Room. From then on we called it the Peppermint Lounge.

MAA: Red and White! (L)

Bird: (L) It did look like peppermint stick candy, really. But it served a real purpose in that old building.

MAA: That was a symbol of the good times that you had while doing hard work.

Bird: And the family atmosphere, too. There were a couple of secretaries that I would also like to comment about. One of them was a Miss Sadie Brown, who was Marian's secretary. She was a Canadian woman, educated in Belgium, however, and a linguistic candidate for a doctorate, although she never completed her work. But a very scholarly person, very tall and sedate. And you couldn't believe she was a WAC during the war, but she was. Anyway, who wanted to call such a person as that Sadie. It was not a particularly pretty or suitable name for her. So she said, "call me Brownie." We all loved Brownie, and Reba to this day will almost weep thinking about Brownie and what a priceless person she was. She was a very good secretary too, and I think Marian enjoyed her thoroughly. One of her rare traits I thought, and I often quote her, was that if someone was annoying and inconsiderate, Brownie would listen to our complaints. But instead of saying "Yes, that was unkind," or "She was inconsiderate," her
remark was always, "She lacked awareness." Isn't that a beautiful way, and that's the kind of person she was. She was priceless. We just adored her.

Another one of the secretaries that I think needs special mention is Vickie Moor. During my presidency of AALL, I lost my secretary -- her husband was a Ph.D. candidate in history and they moved down to Chico, California. I think Sharon helped pick Vickie from among the people who were interviewed. She came to us from another office on campus and was my secretary for a while. Then after I left, she became Betty's secretary, because Betty had taken over my position as assistant librarian. Finally, Marian lost her secretary very suddenly, and Vickie moved over into that position. It's a very close friendship still, and I think that Marian felt that she was an excellent secretary. And a good friend, almost a daughter. So many of these people are daughters to me, they really are my family too. Vickie finally became Betty's secretary again and now is Penny's secretary. I think she needs special mention in this history, because she has been there now fourteen years or so, and served so many of us, including Bob Berring. I'm sure all of the head librarians think she needs special mention and commendation.

MAA: Vickie is a great supporter of this history project, and any written history that will ever be done of the law library will be made much easier because of the records that Vickie has kept. Of course, Marian set the precedent for that. Vickie has always indexed the faculty minutes and kept wonderful files.

Bird: With that length of tenure, the experience she has is invaluable. She knows where to go for things now. And that's just worth a great deal.

MAA: It is. One weakness I have heard mentioned of the library is that the senior staff all came together, and, consequently, all left together.

Bird: There was quite a period of change over about ten years, with Betty's retirement. That speaks well for the staff, that we all did work together so well for so long.
MAA: It does. And there were many others who stayed a number of years.

Bird: Many of the clerical or the library technician staff are still there. And that is why I said I feel that they are my daughters. Even Mary Hubert, the current Circulation Librarian. So many people have said, "I learned everything I know from you," which, of course, isn't true. You see, Mary was not one of Marian's students. She and Ann Van Hassle were married women who had attended library school at the same time. When they finished there were no positions open for them. The circulation librarian's position was vacant and they said, "We'll divide it and each work half time." And they did until Ann left. I think quite a few librarians do that, and we thought about it as far as Ann and Mary were concerned. The University -- rather than getting two half jobs -- got about a job and a half. There was such good rapport between them; they worked well together. So it wasn't one position really.

MAA: Do you see that happening in other libraries?

Bird: I understand that as the new classes graduate, and positions aren't open, that quite a few of them do take half of a position and work together that way. Sometimes, of course, one might leave, like Ann did, and then the position opens up for full time. Especially with so many married women with families, some of them are very happy to have a half time position.

MAA: What about in the law firms?

Bird: People may work part time, but I don't know of any where they divide the job, share the position, like Ann and Mary did from the very beginning.

MAA: Thank you, Vi, very much.

Bird: It's been my pleasure, and privilege. I didn't realize I would enjoy it.

MAA: I hope you have.

End of tape